

POETRY *for the* MASSES

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"Poetry cannot be defined, only experienced." - Christopher Logue

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PROSE SONNET FOR DUMBLEDORE

Dumbledore came out of the closet. Posthumously. A tabloid outing, Dumbledore snatched from sainthood by the writ of his paper god. Now that we've revised him, I'll admit I'd already unsexed his memory—a neuter figure like my first-grade teacher Mr. Drown. Hell, they're old men. I imagine moths scattered into dust when either shed his pants.

Not that it was always so. Dumbledore, the greatest wizard of his generation; Drown, a soulful man with eyes like two similes (like puppies, like honeycombs), with two more in the back somewhere. Both teachers. Both well-preserved for men of such advanced years. I'll concede them a few youthful indiscretions, but who could picture it?

And what if they had met years ago? I see them in the train's dining car. They reach for the same piece of toast, and their hands magnetize over butter and jam. Perhaps Dumbledore sports a navy handkerchief in his back left pocket, encoding fey wizardly predilections. Next I see them adjourn to the bathroom where their love sounds like the grind of a too-heavy train.

O Sacrilege, O Retroactive Memory—leave our lovers be! I wish to keep them safe forever in the pasture of my ignorance: privates smooth as Ken dolls, privacy the same sweet grace.

Kyle Little
Wichita, KS

Sonnet X: Soup & Beauty

The lack of Ativan hits like blood clot,
climbs from gut to skull with dizzying speed.
I curl up on the break room floor: "I've got
to go," I whimper. Once again, the needs
of my most hated qualities win out.
Rebekah sends me home. Then, on the stairs,
I near-collide with Josh, all lovely mouth,
wide eyes, faded shirt, calculated hair—
and halfway to my car, I stagger back.
Aesthetics will trump illness every time.
I sip tomato bisque, and the attack
subsides; soon, by bowl's end, I feel just fine.
I say the soup restores me, but there's more:
Beauty, oblivious, sweeping the floor

Anna Perlberg
Wichita, KS

Lucy Loses a Limb

After 75 years
I didn't bury a husband.
I lost a limb.

Each day a swift new cut:
the upper arm, the elbow, every finger
and then the thumb.
Paralysis where ache meets absence.

At night, when I turn to talk across
the dark, my voice is heavy as hay bales,
thick with the grit of memory.

I feel the throb of
phantom fingers,
erased one
by one.

Drew Myron
Yachats, OR

The Cleaner

I hear whispers of Mexico:
The drug cartels warring
as usual, but now
it is not so covert
as all those fall midnights
when you would pull your car out of gear
just as you reached my street,
muffling its roar.
You slowed the car to a stalk
and then it stopped and raised
its haunches when it saw my window slide open
and I slipped out and into
the car's waiting jaws.

I was only caught once.

Now it seems Mexico
has caught you
in its unyielding jaws.
Is that why
you don't answer the phone anymore?

Are you caught in the middle
of the five-cartel crossfire,
cleaning
up the mess
that your now archaic initiations
have forced upon you?
Like a scar stuck to skin,
you have no way out of this.

So I wring my hands and lungs
in a tight, ballistic worry
because you and I know too well
that you are not bullet-proof.
And that scar—
the spider web cracks
that slithered all along your
back— still burns under my fingertips.

That scar, the sticky leftovers
of some gun's ejaculate
that no cloth or kiss
can wipe off.

Samantha Bisbee
Wichita, KS

GENUINE IMITATION

Give me the fake,
the imitation, the simulation, any day
over the real thing.
Give me the bronze garbage
in Haymarket Square
with the inlaid crumpled Boston Globe,
embedded lettuce leaves,
flattened fish scales,
that will never be burned,
bagged or rotted.
Give me the plaster life size cows
black with white spots
shaped like clouds,
in the parking lot outside
the Hilltop Steak House,
who will not experience
the irritation of flies or
the teat sucking machine.
Give me my daughter's model trains
endlessly circling towns
that have no pollution,
everyone's welcome and whoever's
sick goes to the doll hospital.
Give me the poem,
its room not even a page wide,
where one enters as often as one likes
to watch the man place quarters
on his dead wife's lids,
to feel the grief not your own.

Willa Schneberg
Portland, OR

To the Patron Saint of Open Mouth Snorers

Acts 20:7-11

Pray for us:
the limp necked, bobbing heads,
reverent in our synaptic dreams.
We, who punctuate
our amens with sputters
and snorts.

Faithful to the appetites
of our flailing bodies; sliding
towards hallowed ground
under cover of hymnals—listen
to our divine rhythms as we
rumble forth hallelujahs.

Eyes closed to this gaudy world,
we travel deep
to meet God, our Creator who dwells
in the haven we create
below the sacramental droning.

Pray for brevity
and eloquence—we wait
for tongues of fire, eyes like stars.
Until that blessed day,
worship exists in shifting sleep.

Abe Chang
New York, NY